

TRIBUTARY



Water Education and Conservation Newsletter

Fall 2002

Water Rates and Water Development in Utah

By Lyle Summers, Chief Economist, DWRe



Based on the U.S. Geological Survey Circular 1200 entitled "Estimated Use of Water in the United States in 1995", Utah has

some of the lowest water rates in the country. Subsequent private reports showing average water bills for major cities in each state have lent credence to the perception that water agencies here have rates that are low. The State of Utah has conducted additional studies that show that even though our average monthly water rates have doubled in the past 15 years, we still have inexpensive water when compared to the rest of the country.

With this low cost water Utahans have caused the desert to blossom with beautiful gardens, golf courses, athletic fields, trees and green lawns around our homes and businesses. Many of our rivers run freely down the nearby canyons supporting beautiful riparian and aquatic habitat.

Inexpensive water has allowed Utah residents to spend more of their disposable income for health care, leisure activities and other quality of life amenities. Inexpensive water has allowed us to divert more resources for government services like public safety, sanitation, education, transportation and hosting the world for the Olympic games.

History of M&I Water Development

A brief look at Utah's development history helps to explain some of the reasons water costs are low here. The first settlers did not start their day

worrying about highways and schools. Their primary concern in July of 1847 was digging ditches to bring water from the nearest stream to irrigate the parched land for planting crops to feed people and livestock. Since that time enormous amounts of human and financial resources have been devoted to keeping the water supply ahead of demand. Like highways and schools, water systems were considered public enterprises and cooperative projects were undertaken to achieve the public good.

Unlike their counterparts in Phoenix, Tucson, Las Vegas and other cities in similar desert environments that depended on springs and ground water, early Utah towns were located at the mouth of canyons and snow fed streams. These canyon streams yielded significant flows to support irrigated crops and provide for the culinary needs of the early residents. As settlement progressed, the Mormon pioneers followed a development pattern of large lots to allow for gardens to support their goal of each family being self-reliant. These lots were served by water from the irrigation canals that became the precursor of pressurized secondary irrigation systems¹ in some parts of the state.

Unlike cities in California that developed around other natural resources such as beaches and warm climates where fresh water had to be brought long distances to where people chose to live, Utah communities were established near abundant and high quality fresh water sources. Not until the 1950s did the state begin planning to import municipal water to the Wasatch Front urban area.

Coincidentally, this canyon oriented settlement pattern occurred over significant aquifers where later generations of Utahans, by drilling wells, were able

¹ Pressurized or open ditch water systems for delivering untreated water for irrigation of private or public lawns, gardens, parks, cemeteries, golf courses or other landscaped areas. They provide water in addition to the culinary supply.

to deliver more high quality low cost water to their growing cities and towns.

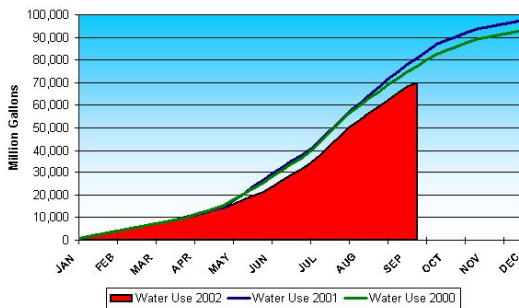
Utah's Water Conservation Effort

By Molly Waters, Water Conservation Coordinator

This summer has brought us images of low reservoirs, dry streams, and browning lawns. The water conservation message is out there. But are residents and businesses actually doing something about it?

The Utah Division of Water Resources has been collecting data from various water retailers and wholesalers throughout the year. This data is weather-normalized, and compared to the previous two years.

Comparison of Wasatch Front Total Water Use from 2000 to 2002



As of September 30 2002, it appears that water deliveries along the Wasatch Front are down approximately 11 percent over last year, or over 28,000 acre feet. That's enough water to fill the Delta Center 73 times!

But Utah's water woes are nowhere close to over. The Governor asks that homeowners and business owners cease landscape irrigation for the season. The lawns will be fine, and using less water will help our reservoirs recover next spring. Additionally, be sure to focus on indoor water conservation during

the winter months. Try installing low-flow showerheads or change habits by turning off the water when you shave or brush your teeth.

For more information about Utah's water conservation efforts, please visit our water conservation website at www.conservewater.utah.gov.

Utah Water Education Month

By Rick Webster, Water Education Coordinator

Water education has been quite busy revamping part of its program due to changes in the Utah State CORE curriculum. Water education has been placed primarily into the 4th and 9th grades. We are currently working on developing a water fair program for the 4th grade. Many teachers have asked for "Utah Water: A Precious Resource" - last month alone we have sent out 2,500 copies. This publication will be going through a revision in order to bring it in line with the needs of teachers and students.

Once again October has been designated "Water Education" month. We are currently running the "Young Artists Poster Contest" and the theme is "Make Every Drop Count". Posters are due to be turned in no later than Nov 2nd. We sent out over 11,000 entry packets and are excited to see the results.

In the past students from the Sevier River Basin have made a strong showing. This year there has been a strong push from the Jordan River and Weber River Basins. We will culminate this year's contest with a banquet and photo session with Governor Leavitt. The banquet will be held Nov 23rd at 6:30 PM at The Gathering Place in West Jordan. For more information, please contact Rick Webster at (801) 538-7299 or rickwebster@utah.gov

